23 20 [illegible] V Kingstonian

By STUART EARP: Kingstonian 0, Wycombe Wanderers 1

PUTTING last Tuesday's home defeat by Slough well and truly behind them, champions Wycombe Wanderers produced their best performance of the season at Kingstonian on Saturday. Fired by a vast improvement in midfield, the Blues deservedly took the three Rothmans Isthmian League points at stake — something they failed to do in this game last term.

Making two midfield changes — Terry Reardon for Derek Cotterell and Dave Alexander for Howard Kennedy — Wycombe pulled out an excellent second half display which brought at least half a dozen goal-scoring chances. Only one was accepted and had their finishing been sharper, the result could easily have been three or four nil.

From the start of this game, Wycombe looked a good deal more relaxed and confident than in either of their other matches this season. The midfield changes certainly made a difference but the front runners were also much improved and young Derek Harris, replacing substitute Dylan Evans, again looked promising.

Above all, however, it was the fighting spirit in midfield, particularly Mick Holifield, that put Wanderers back on the rails. Competing fiercely in the middle of the Park, Mick typified Wycombe's intentions of taking a grip on the game. Terry Reardon, playing his first game of the season after injury, was also in the thick of things after a shaky start while Alexander saved his best moments until the end when he caused no end of trouble on the right flank.

Considering Kingstonian had won both their previous league matches, they were a disappointing side. John Maskell was rarely troubled by their front runners while the midfield men, Joe Fascione apart, seldom got a look in.

It took only two minutes for Holifield to issue warning of his intentions when he sent a screaming shot just past Ian Bath's goalpost. Before 10 minutes had elapsed Geoff Anthony had produced a full length save from the 'keeper and Tony Horseman watched his header sail narrowly over the crossbar. Three chances inside the first quarter — one more already than they produced at home to Slough last week.

Unfortunately, the pressure didn't last. Conditions, with a strong wind swirling around the ground, were not easy and at times, Wycombe were caught waiting for the ball to come to them instead of getting in first time. Their free kicks began to look a little stereotyped too, with John Delaney the obvious target each time.

Towards the end of the half Wycombe won three quick corners and then Harris rounded off the first 45 minutes by dispossessing two defenders but rolling his shot just wide.

Whatever manager Brian Lee said to his players at half time did them the world of good, for Wanderers came out after the break and completely dominated events until the final whistle.

It started in the first minute after the break with the home side still half asleep. Holifield took the ball off Fascione and crossed to Harris. He nodded down to Horseman who stepped past Alan Kelsall's tackle and had only the goalkeeper Bath to beat. By taking the ball wide, however, 'Bodger' reduced his scoring angle and the ball hit the side netting.

Maskell, grateful no doubt, for a slice of the action, saved a difficult bouncing shot from former Wanderer Trevor Waughman but within a couple of minutes Wycombe went ahead.

Delaney started the move by pumping the ball high upfield to Harris. He ran wide and beat Dennis Cheeseman's strong challenge before crossing into the six yard box for Horseman to head powerfully down past Bath.

The goal generated more confidence within the team which began to inject more speed into their attacks, linking together well. The teamwork, so badly needed, was there for all to see and the chances came thick and fast. From one corner Delaney thundered a volley only just over the top which, had it been a few inches lower, would have buckled the crossbar for sure.

Evans replaced Anthony with 71 minutes gone and had a good chance to increase the score soon after he came on. He ran well into the box but took the ball just a fraction too far and sliced his shot well wide.

Holifield looked to have a good case for a penalty in the 84th minute when he was sythed down inside the box but referee Keith Bray, who played advantage intelligently, would have nothing to do with the appeals.

There was just one anxious moment for the Blues before the final whistle. Chris Procter, with two goals under his belt this season, beat Keith Mead for the one and only time in the game. Switching the ball onto his powerful left foot he cracked in a shot just wide of the far post.

Wycombe, however, were in no mood to let him have the last word. Horseman could, and should, have made it 2-0 with just seconds left when he combined well with Harris inside the box. Jinking his way through a bewildered defence, he had only Bath to beat but the 'keeper anticipated his weak shot and pulled off a fine save.

KINGSTONIAN: I. Bath, D. Cheeseman, P. Procter, A. Kelsall, M. Mahon; P. Dade, J. Fascione, M. Cook; T. Waughman (sub. M. Malloy 74 mins.), C. Proctor, N. Skinner.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; M. Holifield, T. Reardon, D. Alexander; A. Horseman, D. Harris, G. Anthony (sub. D. Evans 71 mins.).

Referee: K. Bray (Norwich).

Half time: 0-0. **Goalscorer,** Wycombe — Horseman (50).